



February 21, 2023

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

We write to express our strong support for proposed rules that the Food and Drug Administration has issued to prohibit the manufacture and sale of menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars. FDA's proposals will substantially improve public health by reducing youth tobacco use, preventing tobacco-caused disease, and saving lives. We urge you to support FDA's proposed rules and oppose any effort to prevent or delay FDA from finalizing and implementing them. It is time to put an end to the tobacco industry's targeted efforts to use flavored products to lure youth into a lifetime of deadly addiction.

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death in the U.S., responsible for nearly one in five deaths and more than \$241 billion in health care costs each year. While smoking rates have declined, many communities continue to experience high rates of smoking and smoking-caused disease, including people with lower levels of income and education, individuals living in rural areas, Native Americans, people with a behavioral health condition, and the LGBTQ+ community. Congress gave FDA tools to reduce the number of people who die of cancer, heart disease, respiratory disease, and other tobacco-

caused diseases. FDA is now proposing to use one of those tools – the ability to set tobacco product standards – to reduce the public health harms caused by menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars.

Menthol cools and numbs the throat, which helps mask the harshness of tobacco smoke and makes it easier for young people to start smoking. Menthol cigarettes are also more addictive and harder to quit than non-menthol cigarettes. As a result, menthol cigarettes have increased the number of youth who smoke and the number of people who die prematurely from smoking. Black communities, which have been the target of menthol cigarette marketing for decades, have been especially harmed by menthol cigarettes. Removing these products from the market would reduce the number of youth who become addicted to tobacco, save hundreds of thousands of lives, and advance health equity. Researchers estimate that removing menthol cigarettes from the market would prevent up to 654,000 smoking-related deaths over time, including over 255,000 smoking-related deaths among Black Americans.

Cigars, which come in hundreds of kid-friendly flavors like Cherry Dynamite and Tropical Fusion, are the second most popular tobacco product among youth. In 2022, half a million youth were current cigar smokers. Every day that passes, more than 800 kids try cigar smoking for the first time, and there is extensive evidence about the role flavors play in attracting youth to cigars. We need to protect kids from flavored cigars because cigar smoke is composed of the same toxic and carcinogenic constituents found in cigarette smoke. According to the National Cancer Institute, cigar smoking can cause cancer of the oral cavity, larynx, esophagus and lung.

FDA should finalize these proposed rules quickly. All flavors except menthol are already prohibited in cigarettes. Removing other flavored tobacco products from the market, including menthol cigarettes and flavored cigars, is supported by strong scientific evidence and is long overdue. We urge you to discourage any delays in the rulemaking process and reject any legislative efforts to restrict the ability of FDA to move forward with these rules or other efforts to reduce tobacco-caused disease and death. Strong FDA action to reduce tobacco use is critical, as tobacco use continues to claim the lives of nearly half a million Americans every year.

Sincerely,

Academy of General Dentistry
Action on Smoking and Health
African American Tobacco Control Leadership
Council
Allergy & Asthma Network
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Academy of Nursing
American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and
Neck Surgery
American Academy of Pediatrics
American Association for Cancer Research
American Association for Dental, Oral, and
Craniofacial Research

American Association for Respiratory Care
American Cancer Society Cancer Action
Network
American College Health Association
American College of Cardiology
American College of Chest Physicians (CHEST)
American College of Physicians
American College of Preventive Medicine
American Heart Association
American Lung Association
American Public Health Association
American Thoracic Society
Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights

Association for Clinical Oncology
 Association for the Treatment of Tobacco Use
 and Dependence
 Association of Black Cardiologists
 Association of Maternal & Child Health
 Programs
 Association of State and Territorial Health
 Officials
 Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
 Big Cities Health Coalition
 Black Women's Health Imperative
 Breathe America
 Breathe Southern California
 CADCA
 California Black Health Network
 Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
 CATCH Global Foundation
 Catholic Health Association of the United States
 Center for Black Equity
 Center for Black Health and Equity
 Commissioned Officers Association of the
 USPHS
 Common Sense Media
 COPD Foundation
 Counter Tools
 Dana-Farber Cancer Institute
 Emphysema Foundation of America
 Family, Career and Community Leaders of
 America (FCCLA)
 First Focus on Children
 For Future Lungs
 H.E.A.R.T. Coalition
 International Association for the Study of Lung
 Cancer
 Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)
 League of United Latin American Citizens
 (LULAC)

LUNgevity Foundation
 March of Dimes
 NAACP
 National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health
 National Association of Pediatric Nurse
 Practitioners
 National Association of School Nurses
 National Association of Secondary School
 Principals
 National Association of Social Workers
 National Black Church Initiative
 National Black Nurses Association
 National Center for Health Research
 National Education Association
 National Hispanic Medical Association
 National LGBT Cancer Network
 National Medical Association
 National Network of Public Health Institutes
 National Rural Health Association
 National Tongan American Society, The
 North American Quitline Consortium
 Oncology Nursing Society
 Parents Against Vaping E-cigarettes (PAVe)
 Prevent Cancer Foundation
 Preventing Tobacco Addiction
 Foundation/Tobacco 21
 Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association
 Respiratory Health Association
 Society for Research on Nicotine & Tobacco
 Society of State Leaders of Health and Physical
 Education
 Society of Thoracic Surgeons
 Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD)
 Trust for America's Health
 Vaping Prevention Resource